# CREATING AN EFFECTIVE PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

A GUIDE FOR Those in the Performing Arts

### Comments from the CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL

The information contained in this brochure draws on presentations made at the California Arts Council Touring Artists Conference "Working in the '90s" held in June, 1994 in Santa Monica. It was produced by the California Arts Council's Performing Arts Touring and Presenting Program in association with Community Arts Resource Services (CARS) and documented by EZTV Video Center. Additional research was conducted to expand on the ideas presented.

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The mission of the California Arts Council is to make quality art reflecting all of California's diverse cultures available and accessible; to support the state's broad economic, educational, and social goals through the arts; to provide leadership for all levels of the arts community; and to present effective programs which add a further dimension to our cities, our schools, our jobs, and our creative spirit.

The California Arts Council Touring Artist Conference and this brochure are specific projects created by the Performing Arts Touring and Presenting Program to further the goal of offering technical assistance and professional development to the performing arts community. Since its inception, the California Arts Council has supported a touring program to help bring quality performances to audiences throughout the state. Through financial subsidies, technical assistance and publicity, the Performing Arts Touring and Presenting Program stimulates professional programming and presentation that might otherwise not take place.

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#### INTRODUCTION

The intent in using the term "representation" in the title was to focus the reader's attention on two crucial issues involved in creating an effective promotional tool. First, what is viewed is not a live performance, but a symbol or portrayal of that experience; secondly, the video functions to act on your behalf in describing the salient characteristics of your work. I have spent many hours reviewing tapes of the California Art Council's 1994 Technical Assistance Conference for Touring Artists' workshops on video production and am struck by the immense value of the information that was made available to the attendees. In the spirit of full disclosure, the panelists chose to demystify the role played by videos when they book an artist and to tell about what really goes on when a funding panel views your video. They offered a wealth of information about their needs and preferences. One of the most enlightening experiences was viewing the sample artists' videos through the eyes of the panelists. The breadth of information the panelists were able to cull in a matter of seconds was phenomenal. Of equal importance was their ability to point out the "missing pieces." The artists also had the opportunity to hear from the moderator and videographer Michael Masucci of EZTV Video Center who offered his technical expertise. His suggestions for tactics he has used to produce videos on a shoestring budget were both reassuring and inspiring. My task is to work with the California Arts Council to distill and preserve this information and make it available for you to take along as a handy reference guide.

> Nola Mariano, Co-Director Circuit Network, San Francisco May 1995

## CREATING AN EFFECTIVE PROMOTIONAL VIDEO: A Guide for Those in the Performing Arts

#### Video Representation

It is easily agreed that video does not fully capture the experience of live performance, that it can be difficult, expensive and time-consuming to produce and that a bad video can do more damage than good in promoting your work as a performing artist.

Why then, when artists and arts organizations are suffering the effects of financial hardship, understaffing, and an ever-shrinking pool of funding and audience support, are we suggesting that these same organizations invest their limited resources in obtaining video representation of their work?

It is precisely because of this need to leverage resources that making a video is one of the wisest expenditures you can make. The following benefits that can be derived make it one of the most important investments in the future of your career and the life of your organization:

- Increase visibility in the marketplace;
- Acquaint funders with your work;
- Educate presenters about your work and the context for presenting it;
- Interest journalists in writing about you;
- Help presenters develop enthusiasm within their community;
- Give presenters a dynamic marketing tool they can use to develop a media marketing campaign, develop residency programs, and make group sales;
- · Archive your work.

This booklet has been designed to stimulate your interest and creativity. It will provide you with current information and resources to help obtain an effective promotional video that will bring you a substantial return on your investment.

#### VIDEO WORK SAMPLES: STYLE AND CONTENT

#### I've heard "bad" videos can be worse than none at all. Do I really need a video?

In short, yes. Having a video is essential if you are attempting to book a tour or are complying with a funder's guidelines to apply for funding or to be included on a touring roster. In each of these instances, there are people outside of your locality who are making decisions that affect your ability to create your work, and sustain yourself and the members of your company. Most will not have an opportunity to see your performance live. A video ensures that there is no scheduling problem. What if you are only doing one home season and a couple of other gigs that year, and they don't happen when these folks can or need to see them? The issue of affordability is important as well: it would be virtually impossible for you to "showcase" for everyone you want to see your work. A video makes it possible to introduce your work to the maximum number of people who could be interested in presenting or supporting you.

#### I can't afford to make several kinds of videos. Can just one work for everything?

Should you be fortunate enough to interest a presenter in your work, sometime in the course of doing business he or she will request a video. While preferences among styles of video exist, most presenters will request one of three different types of videos: documentation, sampler or promotional.

The **documentation video** is a record of your work as it exists in live performance. It is complete and done in real time without edits or special effects added during the production.

Presenters most likely to request this type are those who are highly interested in the content or issues of the work and those who are considering booking a specific repertoire and want to see what they would be presenting to their audiences. Trying to capture a complete documentation of your performance would be time-consuming and expensive if you needed a video that was broadcast quality and looked like a polished TV program, but these presenters are looking for an unobstructed view of your work. This is a necessary tape to have. Fortunately it is the easiest to obtain as well as the least expensive and may also serve as the basis for producing the tapes described below. This tape may also serve as an archival video to document your work for the future.

The **sampler video is** a ten-minute compilation tape designed to show in a minimum of time both the diversity of your work and what you consider to be your best performances. Generally this is a short montage of thirty seconds to one minute duration followed by one or two short pieces and one complete piece of repertoire. This is an effective tape and will often be requested by presenters wishing to familiarize themselves with your work. It functions well as an introduction.

The **promotional tape** is similar to the sampler in format but may also include information designed to give a context for the work seen. It may include information about residency activities, a brief history of the company, interviews with the artistic director, or information about the process used to develop the work. Perhaps the tape may show a bit of rehearsal, you working with children, teaching a master class, or conducting a residency activity. Sometimes testimonial footage from presenters, audiences and/or those participating in the

residency activities is used. This is a much more complex tape to make. It is usually more sophisticated in its editing process and technique, often using montage, narrated voice-overs, and creative use of graphic and

special effects. Often these tapes are created to be broadcast quality. This is the most expensive and difficult of the three tapes to develop and there are two reactions you should consider before making the investment. Many presenters distrust this type of video while others simply dislike the "hype." However if you are able to show your work honestly and take advantage of this format to educate the viewer about the context of your work—what makes you unique—then you will have created a valuable tool that the presenter can use to persuade others she/he works with to create and support her/his cultural event.

Funding organizations publish guidelines describing the type of video they wish to review. These guidelines specify format, running time and style. Funders are interested in determining your artistic quality and in the case of roster panels, the promotional value of your video. However, Patty Milich of the California Arts Council advises that should the guidelines not work to the advantage of your work to call and discuss it with the staff of the granting organization. She reminds us that these guidelines are written for all disciplines and the broadest possible range of work. I have always found funders' staffs to be helpful, concerned and creative problem solvers.

#### I hate it when presenters ask me for a video because I don't have a good one. How can I make mine better?

There are certainly technical aspects to creating a better video, and we will offer you that information in latter sections of this publication. Consider the heart of the matter—the video is about your work. It is possible for a video to represent your work well although this is often not the case.

Ivan Sygoda of Pentacle in New York advises that artists must learn to look with fresh eyes at their work as seen on video, to divorce themselves from the emotional experience of creation. Often an artist may be attached to a particular moment because it was difficult to achieve—perhaps, for instance, it was danced through the early months of a pregnancy, or the bulk of your annual production budget was spent on the costumes. It may be a personal triumph, but it may not be the artist's most interesting work.

"Distance" from the creation of the video is needed to determine what "reads well" and to avoid creating a cryptic tape the viewer is unable to decipher. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a moving picture is a library of information. What information then might your video contain about you? At the most basic level, ask yourself what it is that you do, how you do it, for whom, where, and why.

Combining the two mediums of video and performance forms a marriage. Like a marriage, it can be made in heaven or hell-depending on the people involved and how effectively it is done.

Jose Luis Ruiz National Latino Communications Center Los Angeles

To begin with, select a segment that best exemplifies your work. It can be short or long, but should be complete within itself. This selection should best show the content of your work and your artistic abilities. It is the core upon which you will build. A montage of short pieces and photo stills might be used to display your range and depth. One storyteller made good use of montage by employing a folk song as background for a photo montage of performance skills. While this segment was only a minute long, it displayed her acting and singing abilities, told viewers they were going to see a number of characters in costume, gave valuable information about her technical requirements and production values, and even suggested that her stories might be based on folk tales.

A long shot can tell the viewer the size of your company, what your sets and costumes look like, and the size and type of facility for which your work is suited. One puppeteer used one ten-second shot of children in his audience to tell us that they enthusiastically anticipated his appearance. He was able to convey the strength of his following during the opening credits. What you convey by your format decisions can be subtle in other ways. An ethnic dance troupe that wants the opportunity to perform in a theater rather than a

festival format might include a segment shot in a theater to demonstrate its suitability for that type of venue, in addition to the segment showing an outdoor performance.

A conscious selection process can yield a video rich in information about you.

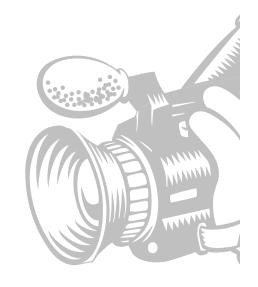
#### I'm a musician. Do I need a video?

Unless you have the ability to record the sound simultaneous to the shooting of your video, an audio cassette

will have a better sound quality. Good photographs and a complete and accurate technical rider can provide a good visual representation of your work. The exception, of course, is if your work is highly visual. You may want to show your abilities to conduct a residency activity, and you might wish to include video as part of your promotional packet. A music video should allow funders and presenters to see how you appear on stage. The video you need to accomplish should not be confused with the "music videos" put out by record companies to be aired on MTV. You need a video that allows the viewer to see how many musicians there are and what instruments they play; how the performers move and/or use the stage space, and production values of the performance. It also allows presenters to see how you conduct your residency activities.

It's scary. I heard once that, during the meeting of a funding panel, someone raised a hand indicating they had seen enough, so it was turned off. This happened after only twenty seconds. How can I get panels to watch my video?

This is probably a funding panel horror story, and probably a myth. Staff facilitators will make sure an adequate sample of your work is shown. But among the many conversations held, topics discussed,



and opinions given, this was the one question that elicited no debate. Consensus was that you need to grab the panelists' attention within the first thirty seconds and hold it. If you are submitting a sampler or promotional video, make certain it pulls in the viewer and continues with a short complete piece that offers as much information about your work as possible. If you are submitting a documentation video, the best work may not be at the start. You will need to select an appropriate section, cue up your video to begin there and label the box so the viewer knows the video has been cued.

#### PRE-PRODUCTION

Whether you work with a videographer, a production company or plan to shoot the video yourself, taking the time to plan is key in reducing the costs and getting the best possible results. You will need to determine the concept, format, length, location, time line, equipment and people and services needed to capture your work. The number of people involved in directing, shooting and editing as well as the amount and type of equipment used can vary greatly depending on the type of video and your budget.

#### Hiring a Videographer and Selecting a Production Company

Finding the video expert(s) you can trust with your work is crucial in producing a video. Ask friends for recommendations, and if you see a wonderful promotional video, ask who produced it. If you need leads, check advertisements in local media publications and contact your local media centers. Many have job boards or resumes on file. Is there a film and video service association in your area? If so, many have members' videos available for viewing.

Arrange to meet with prospective video makers. It may take several conversations to arrive at an agreement that includes all the necessary details. During the first encounter you want to get a sense of whether the videographer's taste and personality match your own. Describe your work and the type of video you have in mind and ask about his/her experience with your discipline. Check a videographer's credentials, ask for references, and make sure he or she is insured. You will also need to set a budget, so come prepared to discuss how much you can spend.

After your initial meeting, you can expect to receive a proposal and a preliminary estimate of costs. When comparing proposals make sure you are comparing apples and apples. Obviously formats, equipment and services vary in time and cost. Pay attention to each cost and if you are not sure what it represents, be sure to ask. Videographers should be able to explain in language you understand; if they can't, find another videographer.

Once you have selected a videographer you will need to meet to finalize the details. It is best if the videographer attends a rehearsal and sees the shooting location to help determine the specifics. Don't rush this process, any details you overlook may come back to haunt you on the day of the shoot.

Keep meticulous notes so you can double check that everything you agree on verbally appears in writing in the final contract.

At this point we enter the realm of the video maker. The technical guidance offered in the second half of this brochure is provided by several video experts interested in encouraging performing artists to use the available current technology to document their work. Because they want tot share their knowledge and expertise, they have agreed to our including information they have written. They hope this will help make performing artists more comfortable with video production by de-mystifying it.

The following essays titled <u>Chosing a Format</u> (page 6) and <u>The Kindest Cut - Getting the Most From Your Editing Dollars</u> (page 12) were contributed by Luke Hones of the Bay Area Video Coalition.

#### **Choosing a Format**

History shows that we seldom have a choice of materials for our most valuable documents. While Edward Everett's two-hour Gettysburg Address, now only remembered by rhetoric students, was probably recorded on some of the finest paper of the day, Abraham Lincoln's was written on the back of an envelope. The fickle nature of events and our blind efforts to document them are still the norm today. So even if you are unable to afford the absolute best tools for documenting your work, you should not let that deter you from doing it anyway. Technical superiority always takes a back seat to relevant, riveting image and sound based on high quality artistry.

A frequently asked question is: "I want to shoot a video. What equipment should I use?"

The answer is usually a question. "What is your budget?"

If the budget is unlimited, you should shoot it in film, which will give you an unmatched picture quality and is by far the most stable format. Seldom is anyone in the fine arts fortunate enough to have a budget to shoot film. In fact, the most popular reply to the above question is "It's all out of pocket."

Always use the best equipment that is available to you. If the only equipment you have available is a relative's VHS camera, then that is the equipment you should use to document your work.

Regardless of the format you use, the person who is documenting your work would be trained in the basic production technique. The importance of having a trained operator documenting your work cannot be overstated. Videos and films, taken as a whole, represent a visual language. Like a spoken and written language, these visual documents have a grammar, and if you do not adhere to that grammar, the visual document you create can be indecipherable and frustrating to your intended audience.

As somebody who watches video tape, tech scares me. High tech work with lots of effects says that this person may be trying to cover up flaws in their performance; that there are bells and whistles because it's not there in the work; that they also may be doing a piece that's so tech heavy I would never be able to handle it in my space.

Jordan Peimer, Highways Santa Monica

It does not have to be that way. Learning the grammar of the recorded image is a skill many performing artists pick up very quickly. Throughout the country there are media arts centers, a public access stations, and colleges and universities that offer basic production courses. (A list of some of California's resources centers is in the back of this booklet.) Most of these organizations teach not only the theory behind video and film aesthetics, but also some practical production techniques. Courses may include: pre-production planning, lighting, camera movement and editing. You can also find many magazines that discuss these topics. For low budget production strategies, one of the best is Videomaker.

Of the video formats you have to choose from, VHS is the most prevalent. It is the video cassette recorder (VCR) that is in most homes and it is the tape format movies are transferred to for rental. VHS tape, cameras and editing equipment are the cheapest of any video format. VHS is not a broadcast-level format, but is your documentation going to be broadcast?

3/4" Umatic SP is a format that has been around for almost a quarter of a century. When it was first released it was a consumer format, but broadcast television quickly found 3/4" to be an inexpensive and lightweight alternative to the broadcast formats (many TV stations were still shooting film in the field). While the number of 3/4" machines around is probably second only to VHS, it is a format that is quickly being replaced by Hi-8 and SVHS.

**Hi-8 and SVHS** are formats that also were originally intended for the consumer market. Hi-8 was an improved version of 8 millimeter video and SVHS was a similar improvement on VHS. The quality of these

two formats rivals 3/4", and both formats are smaller. There are camcorders (one piece camera and tape recorder) available for Hi-8 and SVHS, something that has never been available for 3/4". Many smaller television stations, and many documentary producers use Hi-8 and SVHS for field acquisition.

While there are a large number of videomakers shooting Hi-8 and getting excellent results, SVHS may be the format which offers artists the best price/performance for documentation. Hi-8 is more prone to image aberrations, known as dropouts, perhaps because of the thinness of the tape stock. SVHS is a more stable tape stock, and it can record as much as two hours of tape at a time.

**Betacam SP** is a format that was specifically designed for broadcast use. While Hi-8 and SVHS have their ardent supporters (it's a real religious war), any of them would trade in their favorite camcorder for a chance to shoot in Betacam SP. Betacam SP camcorders and VCR's originally cost around \$30,000 each, but in recent years lower quality, lower cost Betacam SP equipment has come on the market for around \$10,000.

One of the reasons some tape formats are more expensive to work in than others is that they are designed to hold up better in transferring from "generation to generation." The video and the audio on the tape becomes noisier with each additional generation, as it is more remote from the original tape you shot in the field. The experience of "generational loss" occurs when you make a copy of the original tape, and then a copy of that copy, and so on, each copy representing a generation further removed from the original field tape. It is often necessary to use copies of copies when you are editing your tape, and it is not unusual for the tape your distribute to be several generations removed.

Why not just use the original tape you shot in the field? Here is how generation loss happens: Your camera master, the tape you shot in the field, is your first generation tape. The edited master, which is constructed from the best parts of your camera master, is the second generation tape, your dubbing master, which is a copy of the edited master used for dubbing, is the third generation, and the VHS or 3/4" copy of the dubbing master, which you send out to potential funders, exhibitors, etc., is the fourth generation. Betacam SP and the other broadcast formats will hold up the best as you make copies of copies. VHS will hold up the worst.

Along with the formats listed above that are based on analogue technology, there is a wide range of digital tape formats to choose from as well. The digital formats, D1, D2, D3, D5, Digital Betacam, DCT, DVCPRO, have newer technology as part of their design, and are preferred by most video producers over the analogue formats. This comes at a cost. The least expensive digital VCR is around \$50,000. However, digital copies of digital videotapes are almost perfect and do not show the effects of generation loss for over twenty generations (compared to around five for Betacam SP).

Other formats exist, but odds are the formats listed above are the ones that will be available to you. The format you choose to shoot in will determine how expensive your tape stock and post-production costs will be. Regardless of your budget, use fresh tape stock. If your documentation is shot well, it will provide you with raw material for booking tapes and video news releases.

#### **PRODUCTION**

While Michael Masucci of EZTV Video Center recommends working with someone knowledgable about video techniques, he encourages performing artists to get involved. He suggests artists look closely to identify the resources available to them, not overlooking possibilities that may enhance the quality of video you can produce. The following section, Guerrilla Video: Low-Budget Production Techniques, is excerpted from an article written by Michael Masucci with Linda Jacobson and published in Cyber Arts magazine.

#### **Guerrilla Video: Low Budget Production Techniques**

Not long ago, a Los Angeles-based rap group came to me and said, We want to make a video, but we have no money and more importantly, we have no time. Today is Wednesday. By Friday morning at 9:00 we have to ship a music video to Tokyo to be considered for a possible gig. What can we do?"

I asked, "What do you have at your disposal?"

"Nothing," they said.

But I picked their brains and it turned out they did have something at their disposal. They had friends. Friends = extras. Friends = cast. They could get a lot of people in one place.

Next question: Where to shoot the video? Do you have a big place to shoot it in?"

"No."

After some discussion, we realized they did have a place; they just didn't know they had it. The place is called Venice Beach. There's a small stage on Venice Beach. We didn't want the entire video to consist of a bunch of people watching a rap group, so we asked the group, "What else do you guys have at your disposal?" They said, "Nothing." But it turned out they had one hour

Just as you didn't "just" become experts at what you do, you are not "just" going to become an expert as a video maker.

> Michael Masucci EZTV Video Center Los Angeles

of recording studio time left over from a previous project. This meant that we had a second location.

We kept asking, "What else do you have that we can use?" Two of the rappers owned black Corvettes, which definitely would come in handy in a music video. They also had a friend who owned a PA system, which would help make the beach scene appear like a real concert, even if we didn't actually use the system.

When I shot the video, I used a camcorder—not HI-8, but regular Video 8. I used some of the cheesy video effects you get in these camcorders, such as "posterization," which makes the picture appear very high-contrast and brightly colored, a kind of psychedelic look that's now a standard effect on low-end industrial and home video equipment. (Photographers call this effect "solarization.")

This was our production schedule:

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- 1 p.m. Shoot some footage of the rap group at a recording studio in Crenshaw district of Los Angeles.
- 2-3 p.m. Drive from Crenshaw District to Venice Beach.

  On the way, I rode in a car driving in front of the guys in their black Corvettes and occasionally pointed the camera out the window at them.
- 3 p.m. Arrive at Venice Beach.

The rap group's friends were all there and we set up the PA system. When 20 people show up, 20 more people want to know what the first 20 are doing, so before we know it, we had a crowd of people, all happy to appear in an amateur video.

6:30 p.m. As the sun set, we finished taping.

6:45-8 p.m. Dinner

8 p.m. Back to EZTV, where I started editing the tape, completely off-line.

**Friday** 9 a.m. The next morning, the group sent their tape to Tokyo.

No, the rap group's video wasn't "high art" but it got the job done and it got them to Japan. It's the kind of video you can produce with some basic equipment.

#### **Shooting It Yourself**

The simplest way to document your work is to just set up one camera on a tripod and turn it on. While not usually very exciting, it does serve its purpose and can supply you with footage for a sampler video. Even here you can do a number of things to improve the quality.

- You can tape during a dress rehearsal and turn the lights up.
- Set up the camera on a tripod on a slight angle to one side. This will establish a point of view that can add energy.
- Tape more than once from different angles. This will give you a variety of footage for the editor to choose from.

<u>Shoot Like a Pro With Your Camcorder</u> is excerpted from a workshop handout with permission from the author, Stuart Sweetow. He contends that following these suggestions will help you to "avoid the amateur look."

#### **Shoot Like a Pro With Your Camcorder (12 Tips)**

- 1. **Use only major brand tape**—the highest grade you can afford, and buy hinged plastic boxes to store your tapes. Protect them from dust and humidity and play them at least once a year to preserve them.
- 2. Record at least 15 seconds of black at the beginning of your tapes. This avoids any wrinkles that occur from repeat loading in VCRs. Record some black at the end of your program too. This gives your viewer enough time to turn off the VCR before the noise and snow comes on.
- 3. **Your first shot should fade in from black.** Your last shot should fade out from black. Fade can also be used to denote a big change in time or locations. But be careful not to overuse the fade.
- 4. **Start your video story with a wide establishing shot**, to orient your viewers to the overall scene. Go back to the establishing shot occasionally to remind them where they are.
- 5. **Avoid jumping from a wide shot to a close-up.** Go to a medium shot to avoid such an abrupt change.
- 6. **Use clean entrances and exits.** If someone is walking into a room, start your shot with the room empty for an instant, then let them walk into the camera frame. Similarly, as they leave the room, run the tape for an instant after they left. This makes for cleaner transitions from the previous scene and to the next scene.
- 7. **Maintain continuity of screen direction.** If your subjects are moving right to left in the first shot, maintain that same direction unless you establish that they turned around. It avoids confusing the viewers.
- 8. **Watch your backgrounds.** Don't have any lines growing out of your subject's head. Avoid busy backgrounds or backgrounds that are the same color as your subject's hair. Your viewers might not know where the subject ends and the background begins.
- 9. **Use an auxiliary microphone rather than the camera mounted mike.** Our ears might reject background noise, but the camera microphone won't. Invest in a good quality lavaliere or shotgun microphone. Get the kind with three wires and buy some mike extension cable and adapters for your camcorder's microphone input. Be sure to wear headphones when recording to make sure the audio is recording just right.

- 10. **Lead the action when panning.** Your camera should be a little ahead of your subject when following movement. This gives the viewers more confidence they will see where the subject is going.
- 11. **Point your feet to your ending position when panning.** Then twist to start your pan. It might be a little uncomfortable when you start, but at the end of the pan you will be more stable.
- 12. **Use a tripod whenever possible.** Get a "fluid head" tripod that operated very smoothly, especially during tilts. Try out tripods with a camera in the telephoto (zoomed in) position. Practice some very slow tilts and pans to see if the tripod is smooth enough. Look for a tripod with a quick release feature.

#### POST-PRODUCTION

#### The Kindest Cut—Getting the Most from Your Editing Dollars

If you've shot with SVHS, Hi-8mm, or 3/4", you can edit your program on rental editing systems for as little as \$7.50 an hour. Usually these systems are "cuts only," which means that the transition between each scene in your final program is a visual and sound cut.

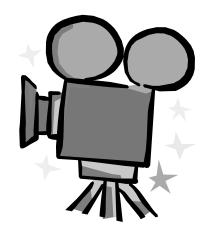
The next step up in quality is A/B roll editing. You can add titles and graphics, and create visual dissolves and wipes between scenes. These effects often make the transitions in your final program visually smoother. The price to rent traditional A/B roll editing systems is at least \$75 an hour. While this is a steep jump in price, these editing systems often cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to build.

A new type of system in taking some of the business away from traditional A/B roll editing systems. These are desktop editing systems, and their most successful example is the Video Toaster, a computer that has titling and visual effects built into it. Desktop video systems promise to have all of the special effects and luxuries of an A/B roll edit system built into a computer that sits on your desktop. For as little as \$15 an hour you can rent a Video Toaster system to add titles and graphics to your program, and dissolve and wipe, instead of cut, between scenes. While the desktop systems have not reached the level of quality of traditional A/B roll edit systems, they are well on the way to replacing the more expensive option.

If your program requires the quality of an A/B roll editing system, there is a way to keep the costs down to a minimum. The key is to make most of your decisions when you are paying the least amount of money. For

instance, let's say you shot two hours of video using Betacam SP. Now you must use that footage to create a five-minute booking tape. If you take the tapes into a Betacam SP A/B roll editing facility to work, it will cost you at least \$75 an hour to edit with an operator. You will spend part of the day getting acquainted with your footage and talking about the best way to put the shots together. In an eight-hour day you will have spent \$600 (not including tape stock). And you may not have even started the edit.

What you should do is what most video producers do: they have VHS copies made of their original tapes. These copies usually include a window of time code information at the bottom of the video. You can then take these tapes and either watch them at home (for free), or edit on a lower cost cuts only editing system (VHS editing systems rent a low as \$5 an hour). By noting the time code numbers of the sequences you want to include in the final tape, you are creating a



blueprint for you and the operator to use when you are on the \$75 an hour editing system. In other words, you will make your creative choices, or your "edit decisions," long before you start using the expensive editing system.

After initially working on a cuts-only system to fine tune your edit decisions. With audio and video material onto a computer hard disk. With the editing software, you assemble a copy of your final program. The advantage to working on a hard disk-based editing system over a videotape-based system is the same advantage as working on a word processor over a typewriter.

You can make changes, even in the middle of your program, with a minimum amount of time and button pushing. The nonlinear system, however, does not provide you with a final version with the image quality of an A/B roll editing system. It does, however, allow you to save your edit decisions on a disk that is readable by A/B roll editing systems. Theoretically at this point, with a finished edit decision list on disk as a blueprint for the final program, the A/B roll system will just cue

up the tapes, and perform the edits automatically. Practically, you will always be doing a little creative tweaking to your program until you are done with it.

Most editing facilities have "rough cut" cuts only editing systems for inexpensive edit decision making, nonlinear editing systems for fine tuning your decisions, and "fine cut" A/B roll editing systems for the final edit.

Storing your documentation properly is your next concern. Tape manufacturers 3M and Ampex have published a number of technical pamphlets on storing magnetic media. These papers have specifications about the temperature (about 60 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit) and relative humidity (less than 30%) of a storage facility. These conditions should be as constant as possible. Just as important, the tapes should not be exposed to direct sunlight, they should be kept in a room which is not susceptible to flooding and they should not be stored with combustibles such as wood or cardboard.

If you use a format that is out of the norm (ED Beta, MII, Betamax, etc.), most archivists recommend that you store a VCR of that type with your tapes, so you will be assured of having playback equipment when you need it later.

Even if you choose a tape format that has a fairly significant installed base of users, there are still some risks. One of the dilemmas we all face is the rush of new technology that is causing equipment turnover at an incredible rate. As we change the equipment we use to "publish" materials electronically, we run the risk of losing the work done on older, obsolete equipment.

The advantages of using video as a tool for documentation are clear: It is relatively inexpensive, the recording can be immediately reviewed and often times reviewed several times in one's own home, and it can be inexpensively edited for a variety of purposes. With efforts to make video a stable archiving format, the performing arts community may soon have a tool that is easy to use and easy to trust.

#### **DUPLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION**

When your video is finished, you will have come full circle. It will be time to place your video in the hands of those influential people you wanted to reach in the beginning.

When the final edit is complete you will have a master tape. Depending on the original format, you will likely need to have it duplicated into a format that is compatible with the most common video cassette players. In the United States and Japan it is NTSC-VHS, and PAL for most of Europe.

You will need multiple copies called dubs. Most video duplication houses can provide you with whatever

amount you need, quickly and relatively inexpensively. It is cheaper to buy in quantity, so consider your marketing and distribution plan and order accordingly. Remember that some videos will be out of circulation during the decision making process and some will not be returned. Including a self-addressed envelope with return postage increases the odds yours will be returned.

Before you drop the video in the mail, there a few things to make sure you have done. Clearly label both the video cassette and its cover. Include a sheet of information that will serve as a guide for the viewer. Think of it as a program. It needs to contain information that helps the viewers understand what they are seeing and to know the order of what they are about to see. You can fold the sheet and slip it between the video and its cover.

Once when I started an applicant's video tape, the panelists found themselves evaluating a family gathering. You can imagine the confusion. Checking tapes submitted is essential.

Patty Milich California Arts Council Sacramento

The video does not need a special mailer. There are plastic hinged boxes made to contain videos and they are excellent protection, but a cardboard slipcover

will suffice. If you choose to use a padded envelope, be sure to use those with plastic bubbles. The others composed of shredded paper padding can damage videos and recorders when the opened package shreds dust and fiber uncontrollably. When sending the video out of the country be sure to check customs, you may need to prepare a carnet to avoid your video being held at the border.

Give your cover letter the same kind of thought and care you gave to producing your video. Correspondence that is well written and reflects the fact you have familiarized yourself with the recipient's programs and facility (and have thought about your suitability) will be more compelling than the majority of videos they receive. It may induce them to pull yours from the towering stack they are trying to find the time to view. And certainly when sending a video to a funding agency separately from a narrative application, make sure you identify which program you are applying to and use the same name for your video identification as was in your narrative.

When making follow-up calls to those to whom you have sent your video, be patient and polite. A presenter who has seen your video may be helpful even if he/she can't book you. Feedback and referrals are also extremely valuable and you may be perfect for future programming needs.

#### IN CONCLUSION

The main challenge for the performing arts community as it enters the 21st century is the need to develop and leverage our limited resources. It is imperative that we efficiently promote and market ourselves. Video, a familiar medium and widely available, is a viable solution to enhance visibility in the marketplace.

This is the first publication of its kind produced by the California Arts Council. We hope it will be beneficial to artists as a supplement to other technical assistance opportunities.

#### **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**Broadcast quality** - high quality video format meeting FCC broadcast specifications.

**Camcorder** - one piece camera and recorder.

**Carnet** - a written declaration that the video is non-commercial and duty free.

**Concept** - unifying theme or idea for the video production

**Demo reel** - video portfolio demonstrating skills and aesthetics.

**Duplication/Dub** - copying or copy of an original video.

**Editing** - the assembling of taped footage to create a finished product.

**Footage** - length of tape shot in production, measured in feet or time.

Format - actual size of videotape.

**Generation** - one step removed from the original tape. Each succeeding copy is another generation.

Master video - edited original from which copies are made.

**Off-line editing** - all the rough cuts done prior to the final cut.

**Lavaliere microphone** - microphone attached to performer's clothing rather than camera mounted mike--may be with cord or cordless.

**Location** - any production site outside the video studio.

**Panning** - a shooting technique used to follow the action with the camera.

**Pre-production** - the planning period of a video production.

**Production** - videotaping/shooting of performance. **Post-production** - editing phase, may include video processes and techniques to enhance the visuals and sound, the creation of the master video.

Rough cut - initial stage of editing.

Shoot/Shooting - capturing images on video.

**Special effects** - video techniques used to enhance a video during post-production.

**Stills** - a photographic image digitally transferred to video.

**Videographer** - person who creates the video format.

#### PARTIAL LIST OF RESOURCES IN CALIFORNIA

#### Northern California

Bay Area Video Coalition 2727 Mariposa, 2nd Floor San Francisco, CA 94110 415/861-3282 Fax: 415/861-4316 www.bavc.org

Email: bavc@bavc.org

Film Arts Foundation 145 Ninth Street, #101 San Francisco, CA 94103 415/552-8760 Fax: 415/552-0882

www.filmarts.org

Email: info@filmarts.org

The Reel Directory P.O. Box 1910

Boyes Hot Springs, CA 95416

707/933-9935

www.reeldirectory.com Email: ivisual@aol.com

#### **Southern California**

EZTV Video Center 1653 18th Street, Suite 3C Santa Monica, CA 90404 310/829-3389 www.eztvmedia.com Email: eztvcyber@aol.com

Long Beach Museum of Art (LBMA) Annex 5373 East Second Street Long Beach, CA 90803 562/439-0751

National Latino Communications Center P.O. Box 39A60 Los Angeles, CA 90039 213/663-8294 Fax: 213/663-5606 www.nlcc.com Email: info@nlcc.com